

**File Code:** 1950**Date:** 02/18/2021**Re:** BURNT CABIN TRAIL BRIDGE REPLACEMENT**To:** Interested Public, Recreational Trail Users, and Neighbors of the Walla Walla Walla Ranger District**What are we Proposing?**

The Walla Walla Ranger District is proposing to replace in kind the Burnt Cabin Trail Bridge over the South Fork Walla Walla River. The previous bridge had reached a state of decay such that it had to be removed in an expedient manner due to imminent risk to trail users. This work will be undertaken as a Categorical Excluded action: 36 CFR 220.6(e)(1), Construction or Reconstruction of Trails.

**What is the Need for the Proposed Action?**

There is a **need** to provide prompt access to the trail system via a safe means of crossing the South Fork of the Walla Walla River as this popular trail receives heavy use by mountain bikes, off-road motorcycles, horses and hikers throughout the summer and fall seasons. It is imperative to provide a safe means of crossing the river such that users do not have to turn back, create new side trails, and/or ford the river, which presents a clear safety risk to trail hikers, bicyclists, and horses and causes degradation to stream banks.

**Where is the Proposed Action?**

The Burnt Cabin Bridge is located where Burnt Cabin Trail #3226 crosses the South Fork Walla Walla River in T4N R38E S9.

**How Will We Accomplish the Proposed Action?**

We intend to replace the Burnt Cabin Bridge during the 2021 field season. The proposal is to replace the bridge in kind with two spans measuring 57' and 66' long respectively. Work will be completed by a mix of Forest Service trail crew personnel and contractors. If suitable native log stringers cannot be located near the bridge site, the stringers will be made from glue-laminate and flown to the crossing by helicopter. If helicopters are used, hazard tree mitigation will be performed onsite to protect personnel. Existing gabions, sills, foundations, and other remnants of the previous bridge will be reutilized to the extent that they are structurally sound.

**How Will We Protect the Environment?**

The project will include design features so that it complies with the Umatilla National Forest Management Plan and all applicable laws and regulations. The following is a list of primary proposed design features:

- All in-stream activities will be performed during established work windows, following relevant mitigations as required for the security of fish, other aquatic species, and water quality.
- Bridge design will account for debris and floating ice to pass beneath it, as well as high water equivalent to a 100-year flood event.
- Whenever possible, bridge materials will be sourced from native materials found in the nearby forest.
- Bridge design and implementation criteria will adhere to the March 2020 USDA *Sustainable Trail Bridge Design* publication.

**How Can You Help Us?**

I am inviting you to provide comment on the implementation of the proposed action. I ask that comments be received within 14 days of the date of this letter. Those comments received by 03/05/2021 will be most helpful in considering the final implementation of this needed action. Comments should be submitted electronically

from the Project webpage at: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=59372>. Find 'Get Connected' on the right sidebar, click on the 'comment/object on a project' button. Follow instructions to provide your contact information and comment in the associated comment questionnaire. **We will not accept any comments via email.** If necessary, mail your response to District Ranger, 1415 W Rose St, Walla Walla, WA 99362. Please be aware that the Walla Walla Ranger District front office is not attended on a regular basis due to the pandemic, so receipt of postal mail is sporadic and self-delivery not possible.

Project documents will be posted to the project webpage on the Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) at: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=59372>. The Decision Memo is anticipated to be signed in March, 2021. If you need additional information regarding these projects, please contact Andy Steele at 509-522-6276 or at [andrew.steele@usda.gov](mailto:andrew.steele@usda.gov). I thank you for your interest in recreation activities and projects on the Walla Walla Ranger District.

Sincerely,

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Aaron Gagnon  
District Ranger

**Caring for the Land and Serving People**